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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000449

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#) [GR](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: THE NAME ISSUE AND NATO MEMBERSHIP

REF: A. ATHENS 1131

[¶](#)B. SKOPJE 416

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D).

SUMMARY

[¶](#)1. (C) Strict adherence to the 1995 Interim Agreement (IA) between Greece and Macedonia should remain central to preventing the name dispute from blocking Macedonia's membership in NATO, once it has met membership standards. A Greek threat to veto Macedonia's membership in NATO, or to withhold parliamentary ratification of membership pending a compromise on the name, would stiffen Skopje's resistance to accepting anything other than its dual-name proposal as a solution. Macedonia is ready, if not happily so, to enter NATO as FYROM; we believe USG insistence on strict adherence by both sides to the IA would reassure Athens that the GOM would not join under its constitutional name. Any suggestion that the USG was reconsidering its 2004 decision to recognize Macedonia under its constitutional name would harden the GOM's position on a compromise solution and create widespread ill-will among the currently pro-U.S. Macedonian public. End summary.

1995 INTERIM AGREEMENT SHOULD REMAIN CENTRAL TO OUR EFFORTS TO MANAGE NAME ISSUE

[¶](#)2. (C) We agree with Embassy Athens's main points regarding Macedonia's path to NATO, and the need to prevent Greece from using the name issue to place an obstacle in that path, once an invitation for Macedonia is merited (ref A). Central to our efforts in this regard should be a rigorous insistence that both sides adhere to the letter and spirit of the 1995 Interim Agreement (IA) as the foundation for managing and resolving the dispute.

[¶](#)3. (C) We also should continue to insist that this is a bilateral issue, to be resolved by both parties under UN auspices through the process facilitated by Ambassador Nimetz. As such, we believe the GoG should be advised against using Macedonia's NATO membership candidacy as leverage for forcing a compromise solution on the name.

GREEK VETO OF NATO MEMBERSHIP WOULD NOT SOFTEN THE MACEDONIAN POSITION

[¶](#)4. (C) A Greek threat to veto Macedonia's membership in NATO absent a solution to the name issue, or the Greek

parliament's refusal to ratify Macedonia's membership, would stiffen Skopje's insistence on the dual-name solution as the government's final offer for resolving the matter. Nearly all political parties would rally around the flag with the message: "Yes to NATO, but not at any cost." Macedonian political leaders would view a Greek refusal to ratify membership as a clear breach of the terms of the IA and as a direct assault on Macedonia's national dignity and identity. Resistance to an alternate compromise on the name dispute would harden. Some might call for a return to the original Macedonian flag, the design of which was altered in compliance with the IA.

MACEDONIA READY TO ENTER NATO AS FYROM

¶15. (C) Macedonian leaders have made it clear that Macedonia is prepared to enter NATO as FYROM. Most recently, President Crvenkovski reiterated this policy in an early June interview in the Greek press. As noted above, our insistence on strict adherence to the IA should reassure Athens that Macedonia will enter NATO as FYROM, unless a mutually-agreed solution to the name issue is reached before then.

¶16. (C) We agree with Embassy Athens that the points in ref B, which we have suggested the President deliver to PM Gruevski in Tirana June 10, should underscore the need for Skopje to avoid actions that could be considered by Athens as provocative. In the meantime, we also support suggestions for confidence-building measures between the two parties that could ease tensions. We note, however, that we have seen nothing in public or private statements of Macedonian leaders to support Greek claims of Macedonian irredentism. Furthermore, FM Milososki repeatedly has assured us that Macedonia does not aim for exclusivity in the use of cultural

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or historical symbols related to ancient Macedonian history. We are aware, however, of the volatility of this issue and regularly reinforce the message that rhetoric should remain low and (as President Crvenkovski just said on local television three days ago) Macedonia should neither provoke Greece nor respond to provocation.

US DECISION ON THE NAME SHOULD REMAIN FIRM

¶17. (C) The U.S. decision in 2004 to recognize Macedonia by its constitutional name reversed several years of negative perceptions of the U.S. among ethnic Macedonians and created a wave of popular support for the United States that remains strong today. Any suggestion that the USG was reconsidering that decision would, we believe, press the GOM to the wall and result in widespread negative feeling among the population toward the United States. A bunker mentality would set in, and Skopje would become less amenable to a compromise solution on the name.

MILOVANOVIC